DC
BY
GERRY CONWAY AND
JOSE LUIS GARCIA LOPEZ
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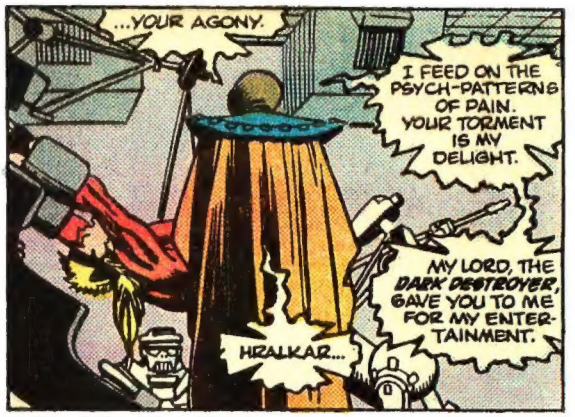
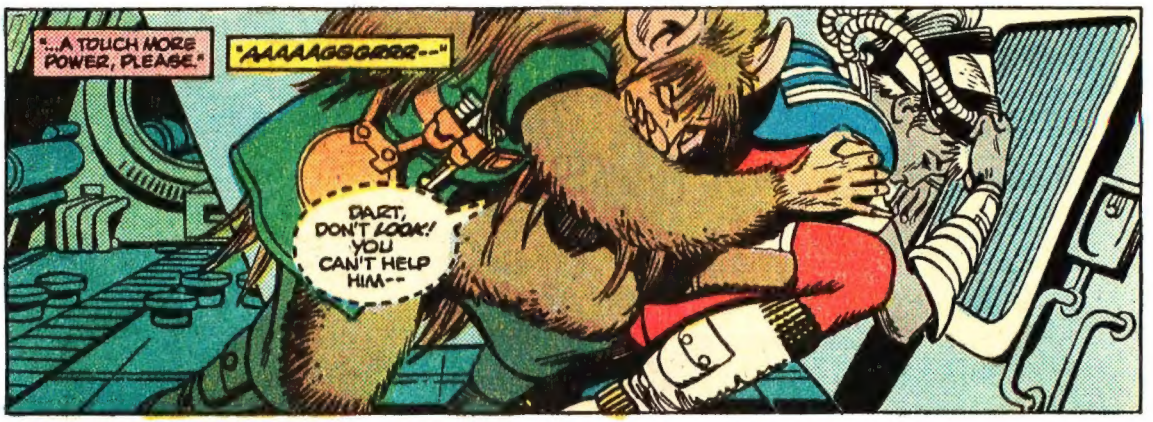
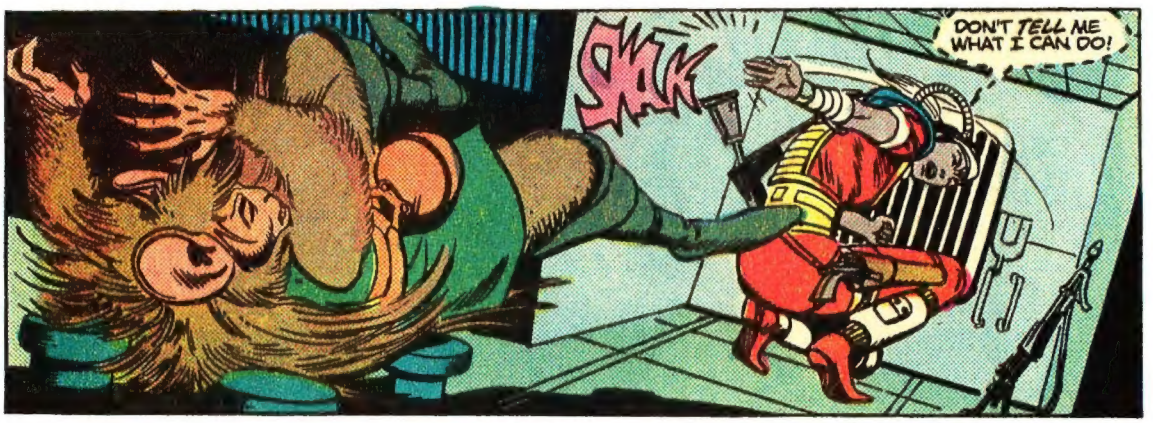
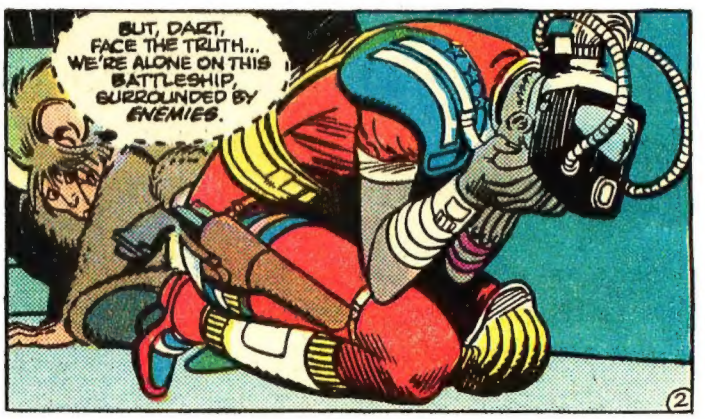
I HAVE WHAT I WANT...

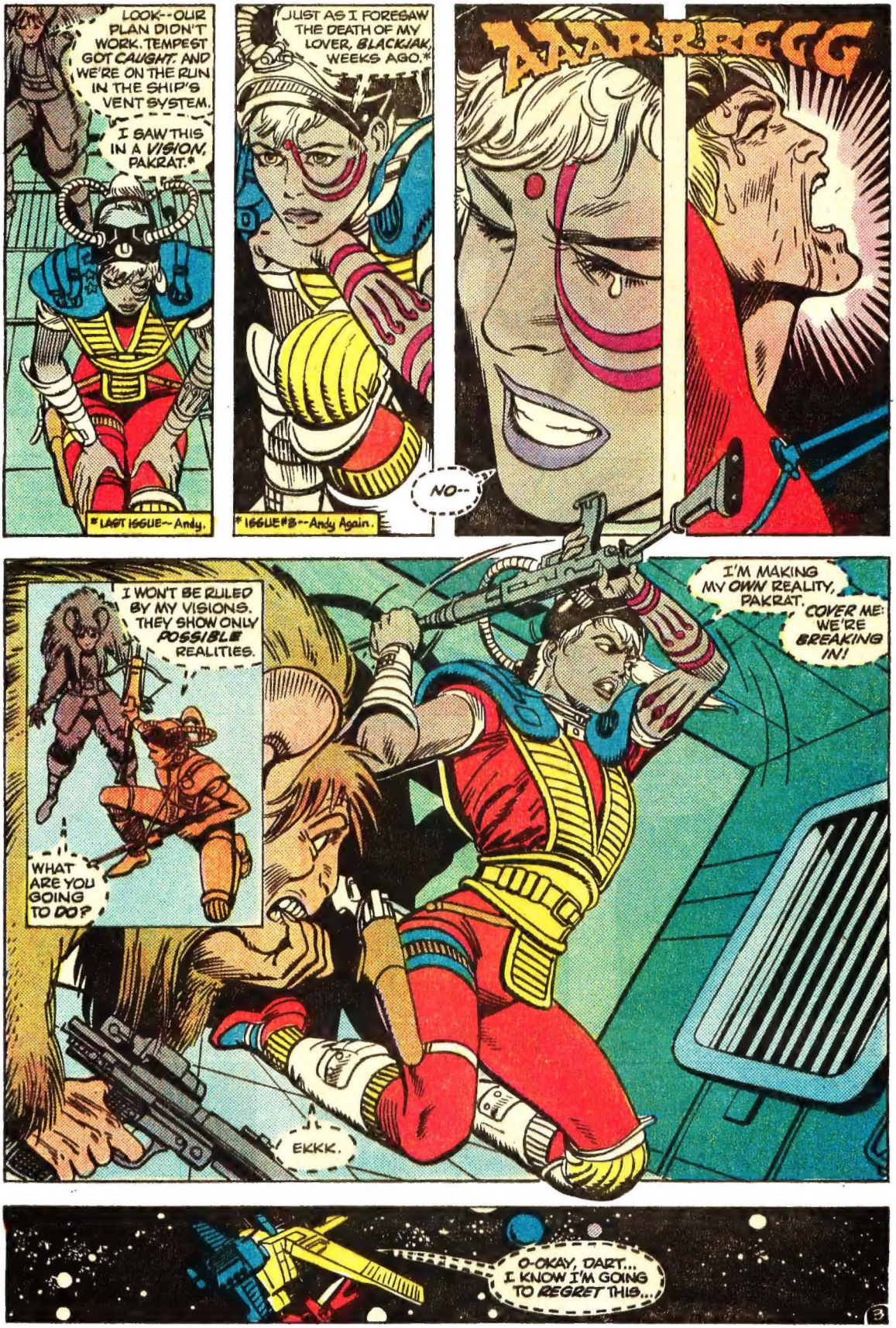

...YOUR AGONY.
I FEED ON THE PSYCH-PATTERNS OF PAIN. YOUR TORMENT IS MY DELIGHT.
MY LORD, THE DARK DESTROYER, GAVE YOU TO ME FOR MY ENTERTAINMENT.
HRALKAR...


"...A TOUCH MORE POWER, PLEASE."
"AAAAAGGGRRR--"
DART, DON'T LOOK! YOU CAN'T HELP HIM--


SPLAK
DON'T TELL ME WHAT I CAN DO!

WUFF!
I'M ON YOUR SIDE, REMEMBER?


BUT, DART, FACE THE TRUTH... WE'RE ALONE ON THIS BATTLESHIP, SURROUNDED BY ENEMIES.


LOOK--OUR PLAN DIDN'T WORK. TEMPEST GOT CAUGHT. AND WE'RE ON THE RUN IN THE SHIP'S VENT SYSTEM.
I SAW THIS IN A VISION, PAKRAT.*
*LAST ISSUE--Andy.
JUST AS I FORESAW THE DEATH OF MY LOVER, BLACKJAK, WEEKS AGO.*
*ISSUE #3--Andy Again.
AAAARRRRGGG
NO--
I WON'T BE RULED BY MY VISIONS. THEY SHOW ONLY POSSIBLE REALITIES.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
I'M MAKING MY OWN REALITY, PAKRAT.
COVER ME: WE'RE BREAKING IN!
EKKK.
O-OKAY, DART... I KNOW I'M GOING TO REGRET THIS...

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

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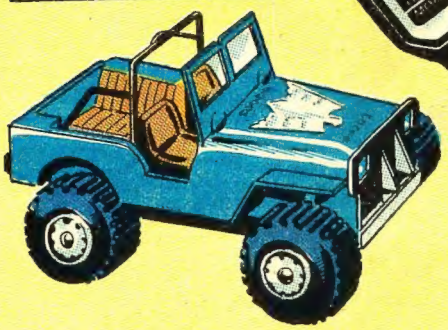

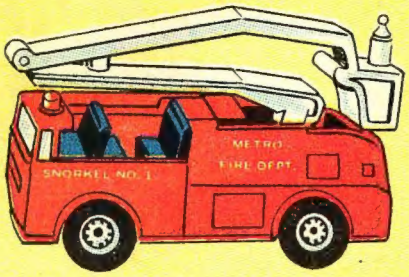

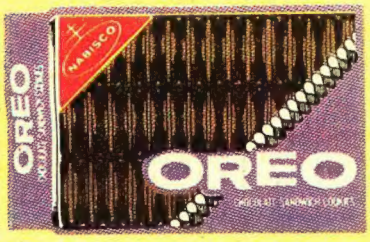

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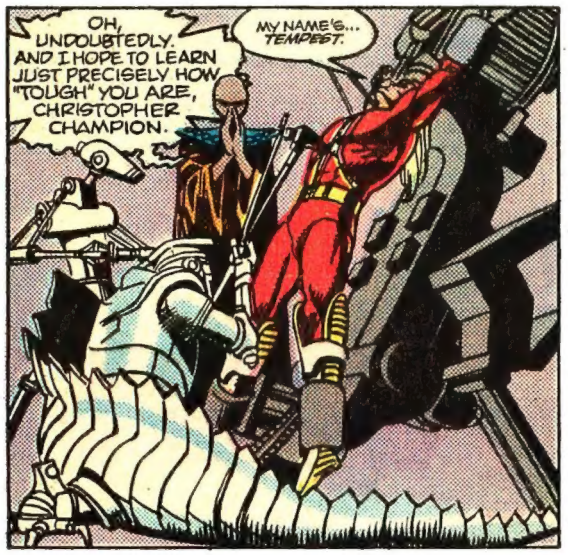
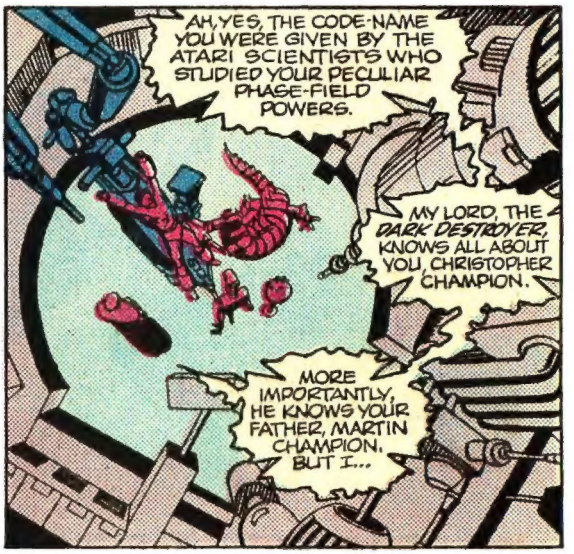
HAROOGA-HAROOGA
THE SHIP INTRUDER-ALARM. IT WOULD SEEM YOUR ALLIES ARE STILL AT LIBERTY. ODD.
AFTER THE FAILURE OF YOUR ATTEMPT TO TAKE THIS SHIP BY SUBTERFUGE--
--I THOUGHT YOUR FRIENDS WOULD HAVE BEEN CAPTURED.

SURPRISED, PSYKLOPS?
WE'RE TOUGHER... THAN YOU THINK.

COUGH

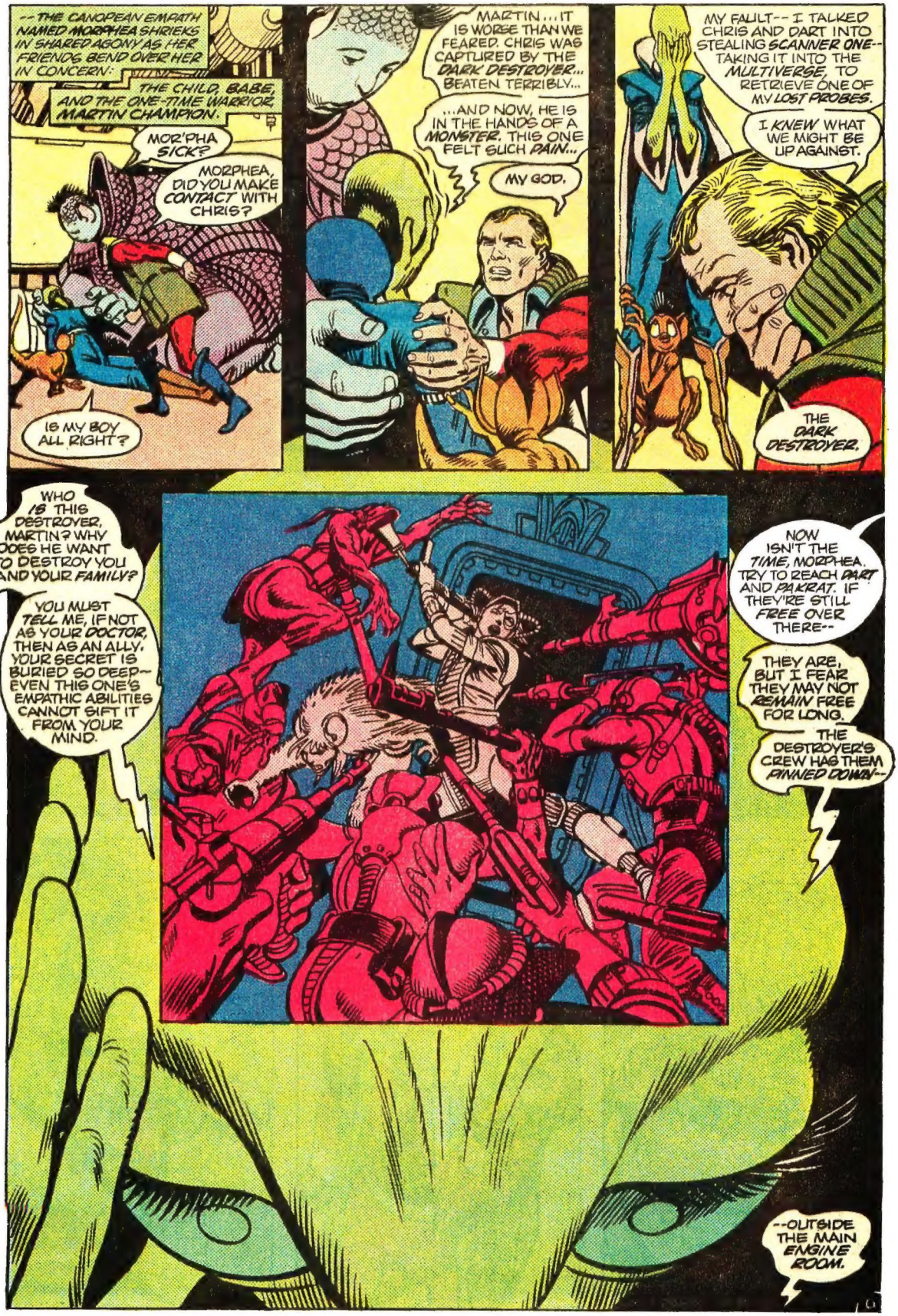

OH, UNDOUBTEDLY. AND I HOPE TO LEARN JUST PRECISELY HOW "TOUGH" YOU ARE, CHRISTOPHER CHAMPION.
MY NAME'S... TEMPEST.

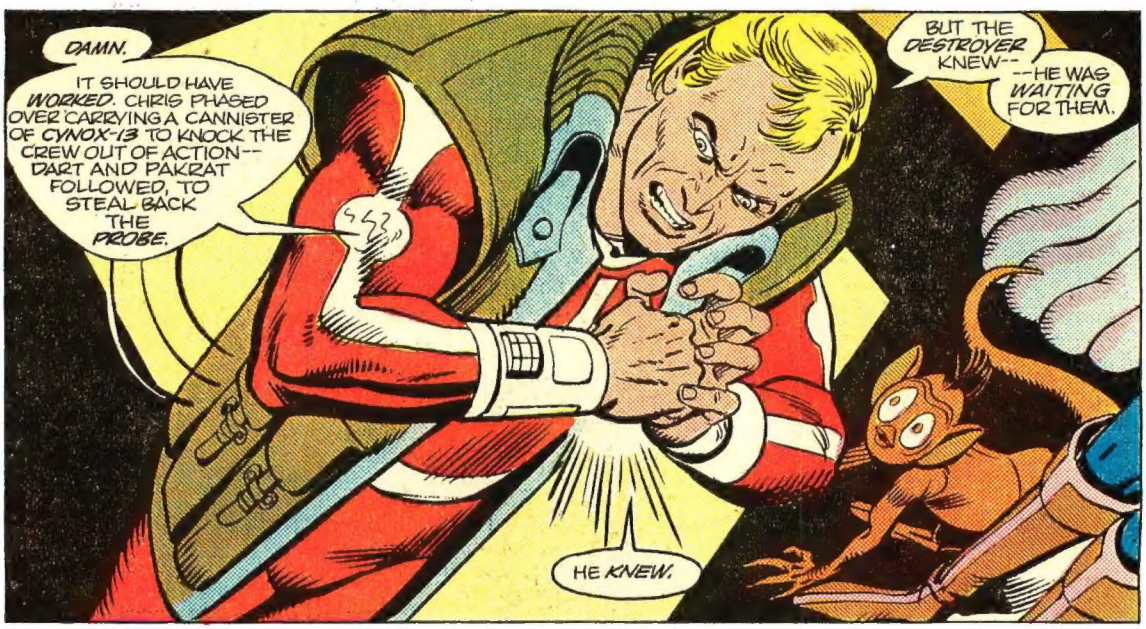

AH, YES, THE CODE-NAME YOU WERE GIVEN BY THE ATARI SCIENTISTS WHO STUDIED YOUR PECULIAR PHASE-FIELD POWERS.
MY LORD, THE DARK DESTROYER, KNOWS ALL ABOUT YOU, CHRISTOPHER CHAMPION.
MORE IMPORTANTLY, HE KNOWS YOUR FATHER, MARTIN CHAMPION. BUT I...

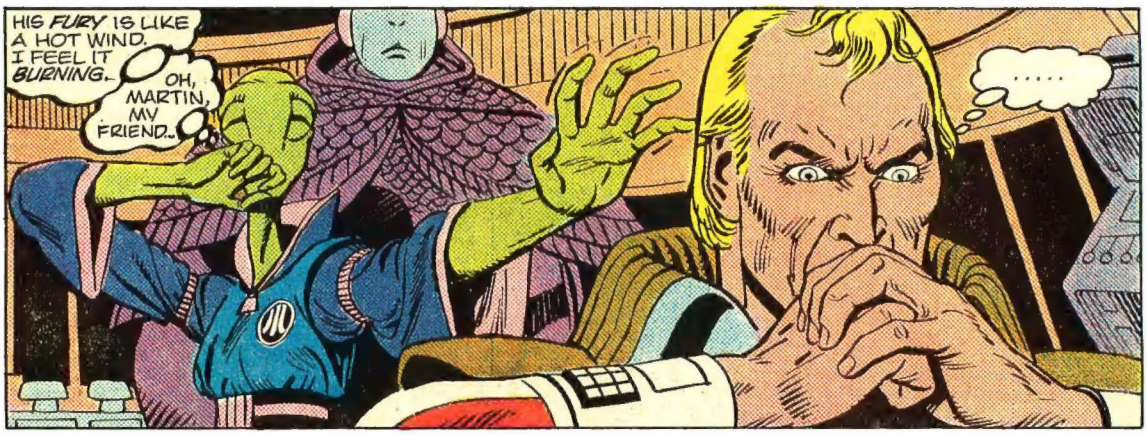
...I HAVE JUST BEGUN TO LEARN.
HRALKAR... THE POWER, PLEASE...
AH, YESSSS...

ARRRR!!!
CHRIS...

NOOOOO...
ABOARD SCANNER ONE. BARELY A KILOMETER FROM THE DARK DESTROYER'S BATTLE-CRAFT--


--THE CANOPEAN EMPATH NAMED MORPHEA SHRIEKS IN SHARED AGONY AS HER FRIENDS BEND OVER HER IN CONCERN:
THE CHILD, BABE, AND THE ONE-TIME WARRIOR, MARTIN CHAMPION.
MOR'PHA SICK?
MORPHEA, DID YOU MAKE CONTACT WITH CHRIS?
IS MY BOY ALL RIGHT?
MARTIN... IT IS WORSE THAN WE FEARED. CHRIS WAS CAPTURED BY THE DARK DESTROYER... BEATEN TERRIBLY...
...AND NOW, HE IS IN THE HANDS OF A MONSTER. THIS ONE FELT SUCH PAIN...
MY GOD.
MY FAULT-- I TALKED CHRIS AND DART INTO STEALING SCANNER ONE-- TAKING IT INTO THE MULTIVERSE, TO RETRIEVE ONE OF MY LOST PROBES.
I KNEW WHAT WE MIGHT BE UP AGAINST.
THE DARK DESTROYER.
WHO IS THIS DESTROYER, MARTIN? WHY DOES HE WANT TO DESTROY YOU AND YOUR FAMILY?
YOU MUST TELL ME, IF NOT AS YOUR DOCTOR, THEN AS AN ALLY. YOUR SECRET IS BURIED SO DEEP-- EVEN THIS ONE'S EMPATHIC ABILITIES CANNOT SIFT IT FROM YOUR MIND.
NOW ISN'T THE TIME, MORPHEA. TRY TO REACH DART AND PAKRAT. IF THEY'RE STILL FREE OVER THERE--
THEY ARE, BUT I FEAR THEY MAY NOT REMAIN FREE FOR LONG.
THE DESTROYER'S CREW HAS THEM PINNED DOWN--
--OUTSIDE THE MAIN ENGINE ROOM.


DAMN.
IT SHOULD HAVE WORKED. CHRIS PHASED OVER CARRYING A CANNISTER OF CYNOX-13 TO KNOCK THE CREW OUT OF ACTION-- DART AND PAKRAT FOLLOWED, TO STEAL BACK THE PROBE.
BUT THE DESTROYER KNEW--
--HE WAS WAITING FOR THEM.
HE KNEW.


HIS FURY IS LIKE A HOT WIND. I FEEL IT BURNING..
OH, MARTIN, MY FRIEND..
.....

HE KILLED MY WIFE. HE DESTROYED MY LIFE.

BUT I WILL NOT LET HIM TAKE MY SON!

IT'S ME HE WANTS.
FINE.
HE'S GOT ME.

ABOARD THE BLACK SHIP...

YES, KARGG. I SEE.

A SMALL SHUTTLE CRAFT HAS LEFT SCANNER ONE. IT APPROACHES.

AS I ANTICIPATED.

OPEN COMMUNICATIONS.

COMMANDER CHAMPION TO THE ENEMY:

YOU WIN.

PERMISSION TO COME ABOARD?

GRANTED.

KARGG, ACTIVATE THE TRACTOR BEAM...

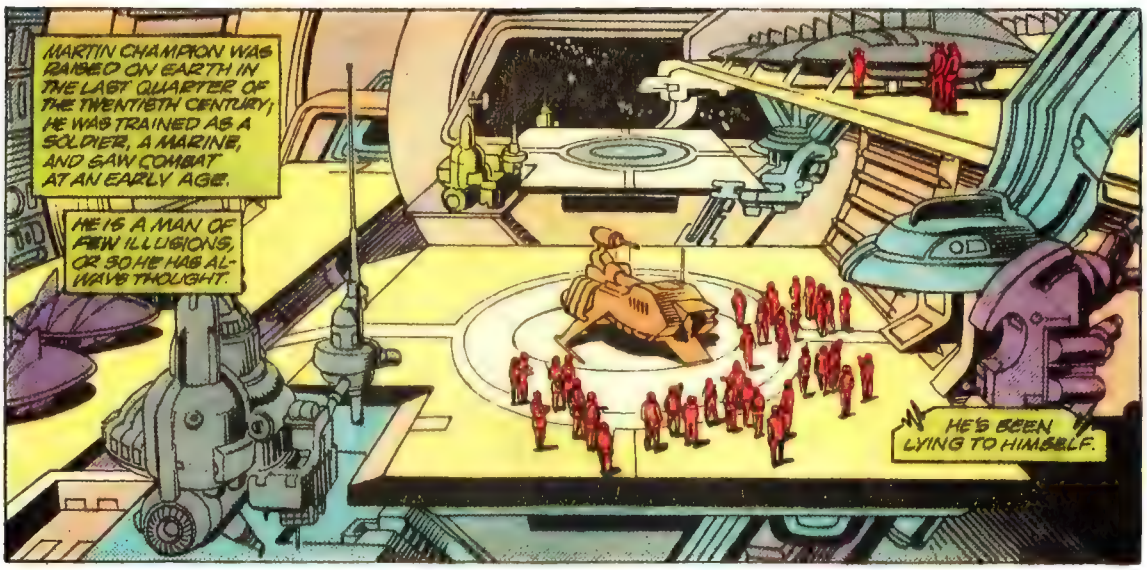
"...AND PREPARE A SUITABLE RECEPTION."

FORCE-FIELDS CLAMP LIKE A MAILED FIST AROUND CHAMPIONS SHUTTLE.

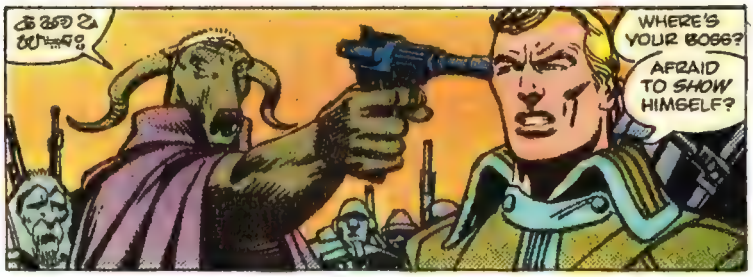
FROM A VANTAGE POINT A THOUSAND KILOMETERS DISTANT, ABOARD AN ATARI SCOUT SHIP, CUSTOMS OFFICER RIDENT WATCHES WITH INTEREST.

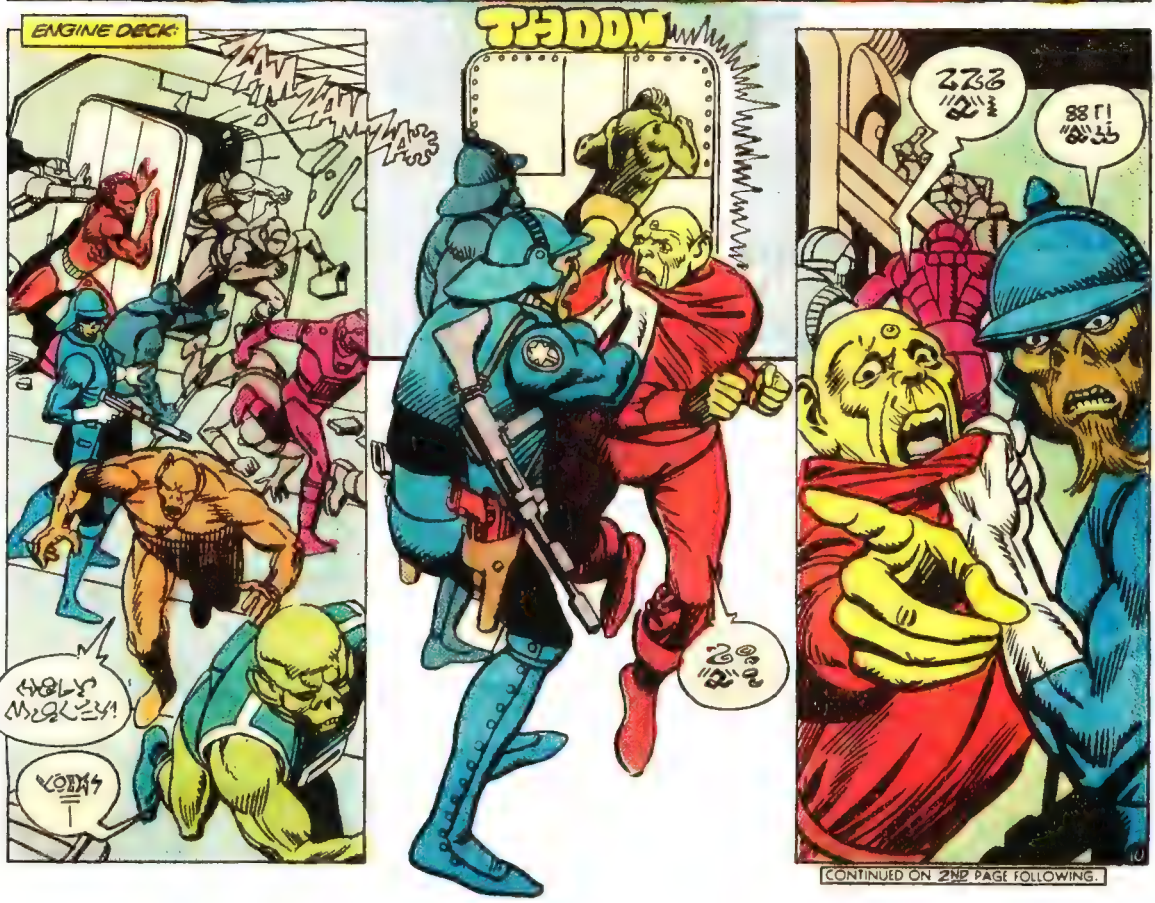
"WHAT ARE THESE PIRATES UP TO?" HE WONDERS.

HE'LL JUST HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE, WAIT AND SEE.


MARTIN CHAMPION WAS RAISED ON EARTH IN THE LAST QUARTER OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY; HE WAS TRAINED AS A SOLDIER, A MARINE, AND SAW COMBAT AT AN EARLY AGE.
HE IS A MAN OF FEW ILLUSIONS, OR SO HE HAS ALWAYS THOUGHT.
HE'S BEEN LYING TO HIMSELF.

ONE OF MARTIN CHAMPION'S MOST PERSISTENT DELUSIONS CONCERNS HIS OWN TOTAL FEARLESSNESS.
BY ALL RIGHTS, AS HE CONFRONTS THE WARRIORS OF HIS ENEMY, MARTIN CHAMPION SHOULD BE TERRIFIED.
BUT HE'S JUST TOO DELUDED TO REALIZE IT.





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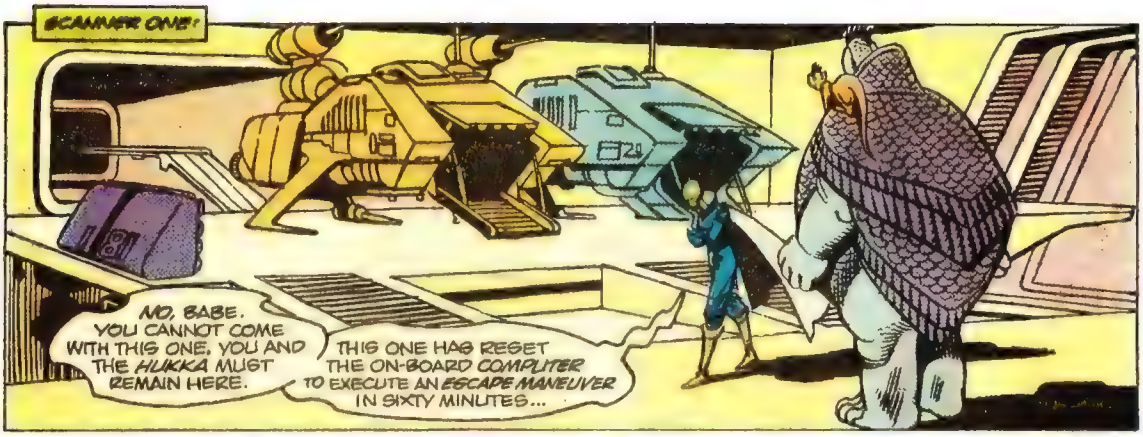
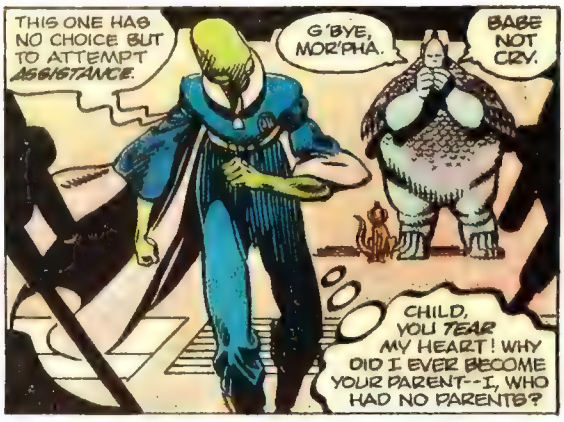
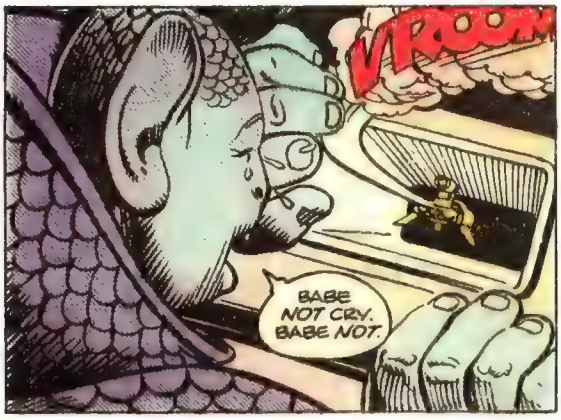
INSIDE--
D-DART... WHAT DID WE DO?
WE WON.
WE DID?
YEP.
SO HERE WE ARE, LOCKED IN WITH THE MAIN DRIVERS.
FROM ONE POINT OF VIEW, WE'RE TRAPPED. BUT, AS MY OLD FRIEND BLACKJAK USED TO SAY-- "ONE YO-YO'S POINT OF VIEW IS ANOTHER YO-YO'S GUNSIGHT."
WE WON.
I FEEL SICK.

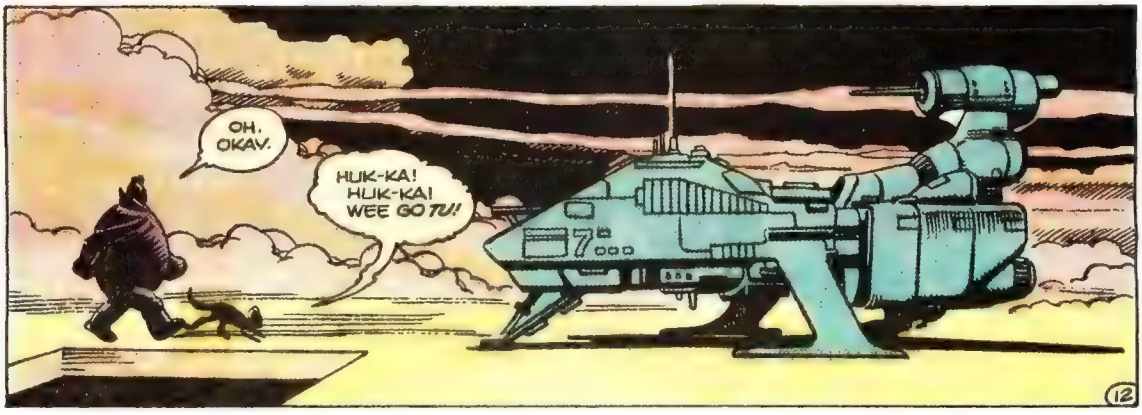

SCANNER ONE:
NO, BABE. YOU CANNOT COME WITH THIS ONE, YOU AND THE HUKKA MUST REMAIN HERE.
THIS ONE HAS RESET THE ON-BOARD COMPUTER TO EXECUTE AN ESCAPE MANEUVER IN SIXTY MINUTES...

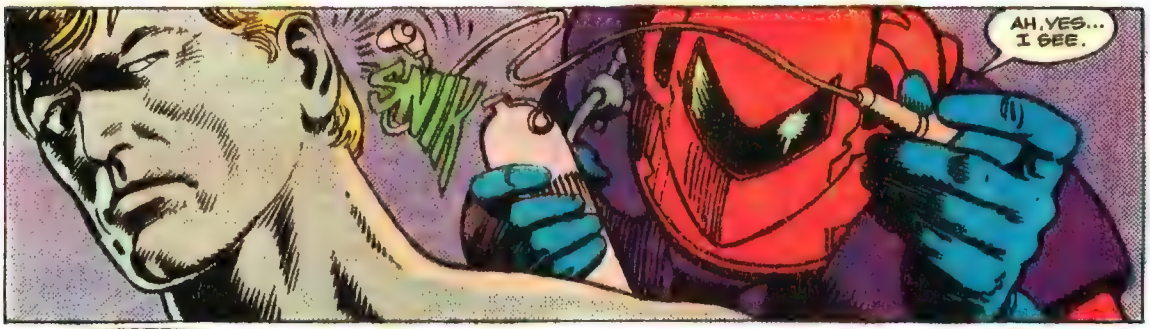
IF THIS ONE HAS NOT RETURNED IN THAT TIME, AT LEAST YOU WILL BE SAFE.
WHY MOR'PHA G'WAY?
MARTIN HAS BEEN GONE THIRTY MINUTES WITHOUT COMMUNICATION.


THIS ONE HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO ATTEMPT ASSISTANCE.
G'BYE, MOR'PHA.
BABE NOT CRY.
CHILD, YOU TEAR MY HEART! WHY DID I EVER BECOME YOUR PARENT--I, WHO HAD NO PARENTS?


VROOM
BABE NOT CRY. BABE NOT.

HUK-KA! HUK-KA!
SCOW SHEEP! SCOW SHEEP!


OH. OKAY.
HUK-KA! HUK-KA! WEE GO TU!



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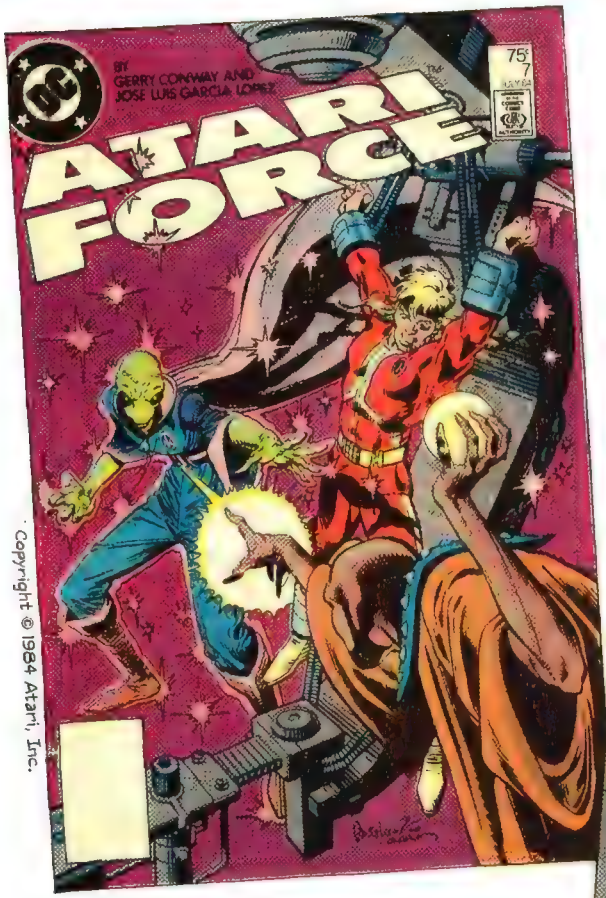
GET 'EM AT YOUR COMIC STO



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IT'S NOT WHAT YOU EXPECT!
BY GERRY CONWAY,
JOSE LUIS GARCIA LOPEZ &
RICARDO VILLAGRAN
THE *ATARI FORCE* SEARCHES FOR A WAY TO FREE THE CAPTIVE TEMPEST, HELD BY THE PSYCHIC SADIST PSYKLOP.

VIGILANTE! THE LIVING INSTRUMENT OF JUSTICE!
BY MARV WOLFMAN,
ROSS ANDRU &
MIKE DE CARLO
THE ELECTROCUTIONER IS ON THE TRAIL OF A COMPUTER CHIP THIEF--AND *VIGILANTE* MUST STOP THE ELECTROCUTIONER--AT ANY COST! DELUX FORMAT.

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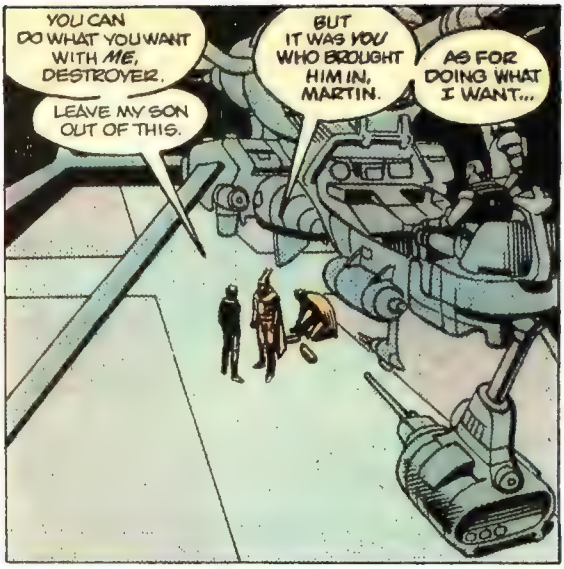
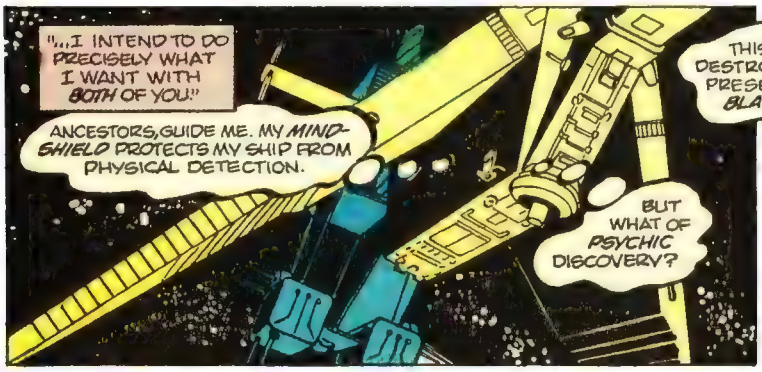
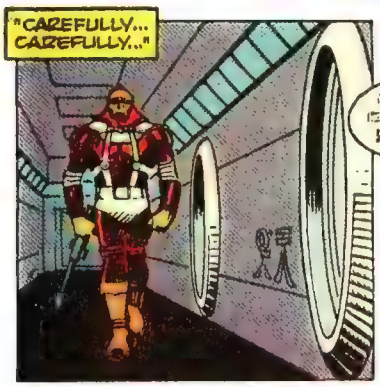
WHERE'S MY BOY?
SAFE.


YOU CAN DO WHAT YOU WANT WITH ME, DESTROYER.
LEAVE MY SON OUT OF THIS.
BUT IT WAS YOU WHO BROUGHT HIM IN, MARTIN.
AS FOR DOING WHAT I WANT...

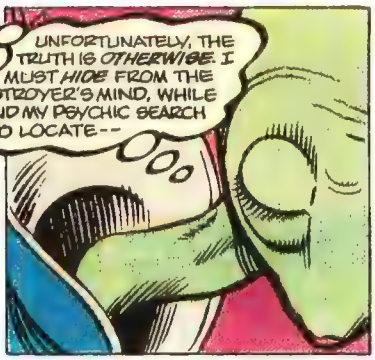

"...I INTEND TO DO PRECISELY WHAT I WANT WITH BOTH OF YOU."
ANCESTORS, GUIDE ME. MY MIND-SHIELD PROTECTS MY SHIP FROM PHYSICAL DETECTION.
BUT WHAT OF PSYCHIC DISCOVERY?

THIS CLOSE, THE DESTROYER'S TELEPATHIC PRESENCE IS LIKE A BLACK BARRIER.
I MUST BREACH THAT BARRIER WITHOUT REVEALING MYSELF.


"CAREFULLY... CAREFULLY..."

THERE.

IF MY MIND-STING COULD STRIKE DOWN THE DESTROYER AS EASILY AS IT DOES HIS GUARDS, I WOULD HAVE LITTLE TO FEAR.


UNFORTUNATELY, THE TRUTH IS OTHERWISE. I MUST HIDE FROM THE DESTROYER'S MIND, WHILE I EXPAND MY PSYCHIC SEARCH TO LOCATE--

--CHRIS.

AAAAAHHH
DELIGHTFUL. SHARING ANOTHER'S PAIN CAN BE EXQUISITE. NO DEEPER FORM OF COMMUNICATION EXISTS.
WE TOUCH ON A PRIMAL LEVEL, MIND TO MIND, SOUL TO SOUL.
HOW THRILLING.
YOU--
--BEAST!
WHAT'S THIS?
YOU HAVE ANOTHER WOULD-BE SAVIOR, BOY. AMUSING.
THIS ONE HAS COME TO FREE YOU, CHRIS!
MORPHEA?
FREE HIM? WITH YOUR PATHETICALLY LIMITED PSYCHIC POWERS?
OH, I THINK NOT.

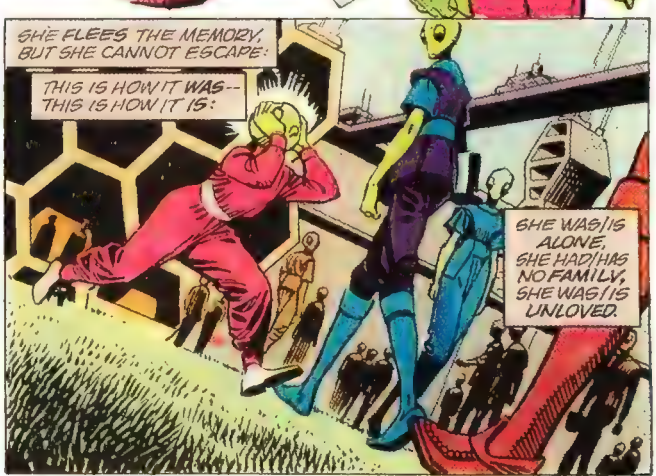
"HOW WILL YOU FREE HIM...

"...WHEN YOU CANNOT EVEN FREE YOURSELF?"

ANCESTORS!

SHE KNOWS THIS PLACE: IT LIVES IN HER MEMORY EVERY WAKING AND DREAMING MOMENT.

IT IS A SECRET PLACE, A HIDDEN PLACE OF NEVER-FORGOTTEN LONELINESS AND TERROR. WHERE THE CHILD SHE WAS STILL TREMBLES AND LONGS FOR LOVE. THE CHILD SHE WAS.. AND THE CHILD SHE STILL IS.



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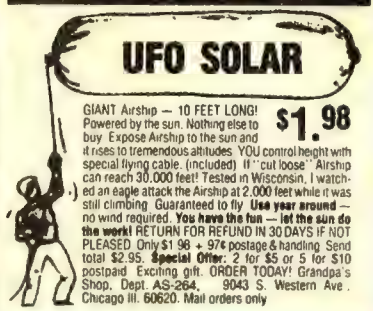

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HE LEARNED THE TRUTH
ABOUT HIMSELF.

AND HE DOESN'T LIKE IT.
HE DOESN'T LIKE IT AT ALL.

THE SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING

BY EAGLE AWARD-WINNING WRITER ALAN MOORE
and ARTISTS STEPHEN BISSETTE & JOHN TOTLEBEN

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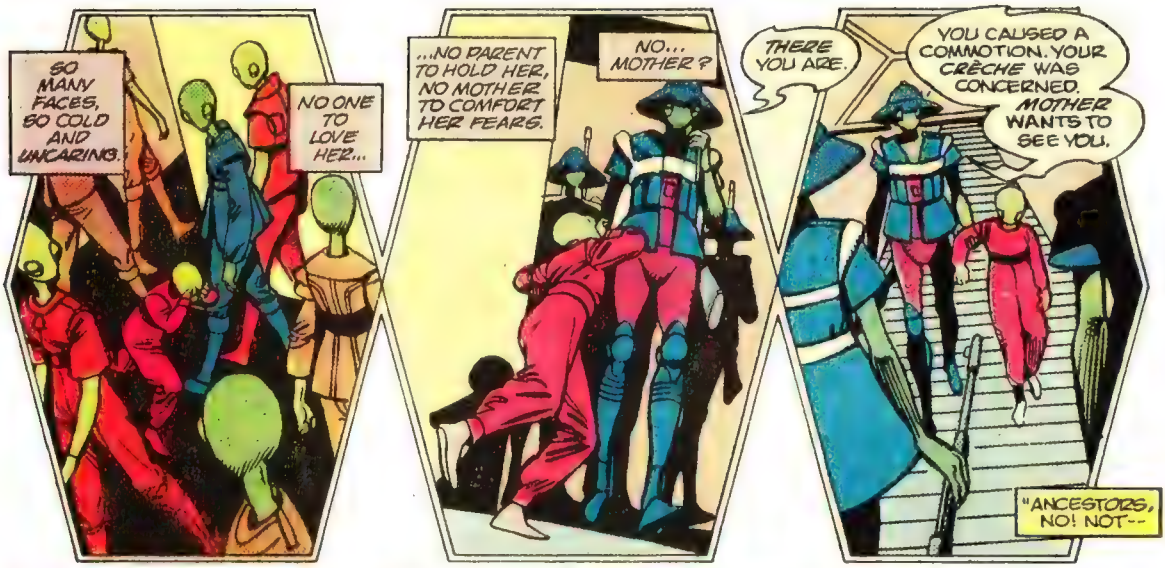
MAKE SURE YOU ARE TOO!!

THE NEW DC. THERE'S NO STOPPING US NOW!



"--MOTHER."

MORPHEA, OF ALL MY MANY CHILDREN, ONLY YOU ARE *DIFFERENT*. I ASK YOU, *WHY?*

WHY WILL YOU *NOT* DO AS YOUR SISTERS DO, AND PREPARE WILLINGLY TO TAKE YOUR PLACE IN OUR SOCIETY?

MOTHER... I'M *LONELY!*

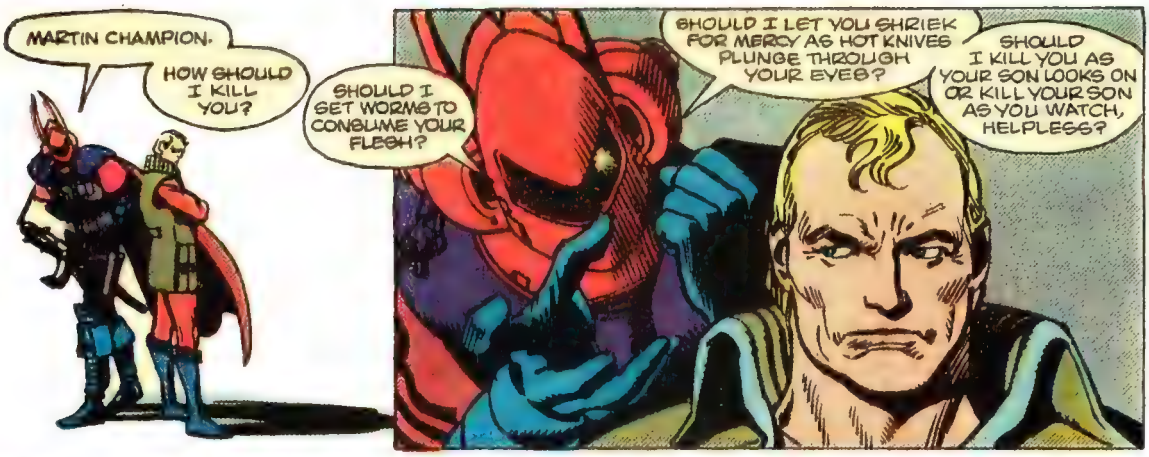
LONELY, WITH A WORLD FULL OF *SIBLINGS*. AND WHAT IS WORSE, YOU USE THE FORBIDDEN PRONOUN "*I*"!

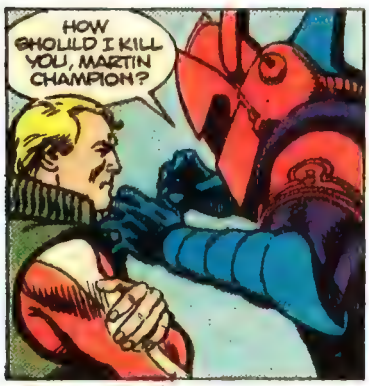
MORPHEA, YOU ARE *SUCH* A DISAPPOINTMENT TO ME...

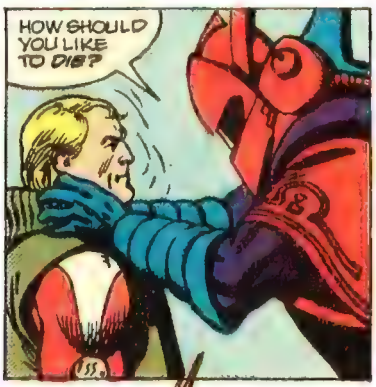
...YOU MUST BE PUNISHED.
THE TROUBLE IS, YOU HAVE AN IDENTITY.
WE'LL SOON DISPOSE OF THAT.
EEEEEEEEE!
SHE REELS — HER THOUGHTS, HER MIND, HER SENSE OF SELF ARE BEING STRIPPED AWAY.
SHE IS FRAGMENTING, DISSOLVING.
SHE IS BEING DESTROYED.
NO.
THIS ONE MATTERS.
THIS ONE IS REAL.
THIS ONE WILL NOT BE DESTROYED!
I... MATTER!
I... AM REAL!
I WILL NOT BE DESTROYED!
I WON'T LET YOU.

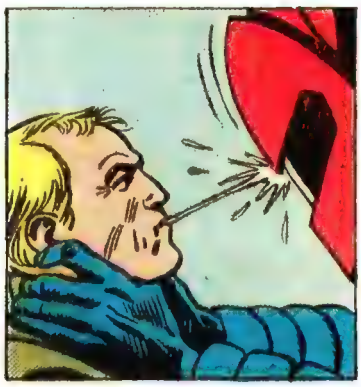
THE PAIN! THE PAIN!
I CANNOT BEAR THE PAIN!
A MOMENT THERE-- MORPHEA STAGGERED WHEN PSYKLOPS' BRAIN-BLAST HIT HER. THOUGHT SHE WAS GOING DOWN...
...BUT LOOK AT HER NOW.
HIZALKAR-- USE YOUR WEAPONS-- ANNIHILATE HER!
SPAZAK
YOUR TOYS CANNOT PROTECT YOU, BEAST.
BUT THE PAIN-- IS MORE THAN I CAN STAND!
PLEASE STOP!
PLEASE!
PLEASE, INDEED.

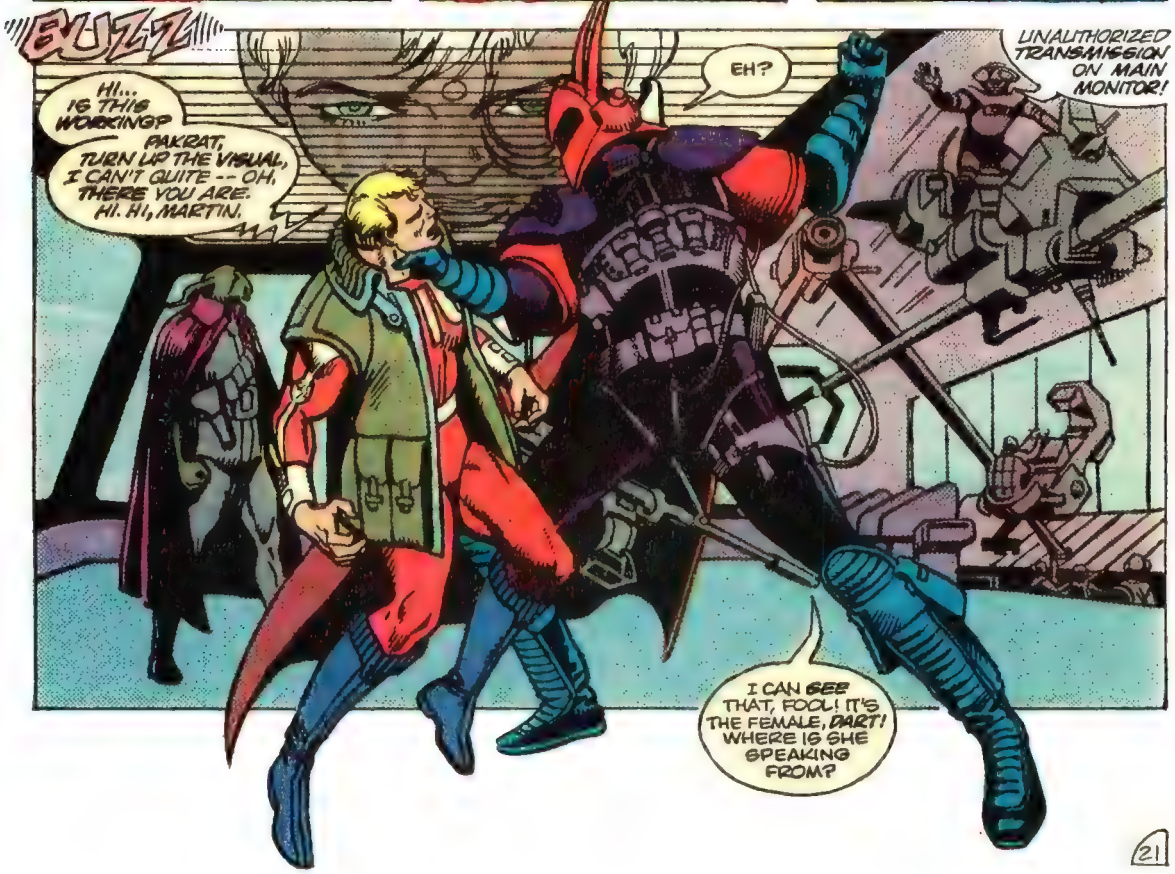
REMIND ME NEVER TO GET YOU MAD.
PSYKLOPS ENTERED THIS ONE'S MIND.
HE AWAKENED MEMORIES LONG SLEEPING.
WHERE'S DAD... AND DART?
HEY, YOU'RE STRONG.
REST, CHRISTOPHER. YOU ARE SAFE NOW.
NO ONE WILL HURT YOU AGAIN.
I PROMISE.

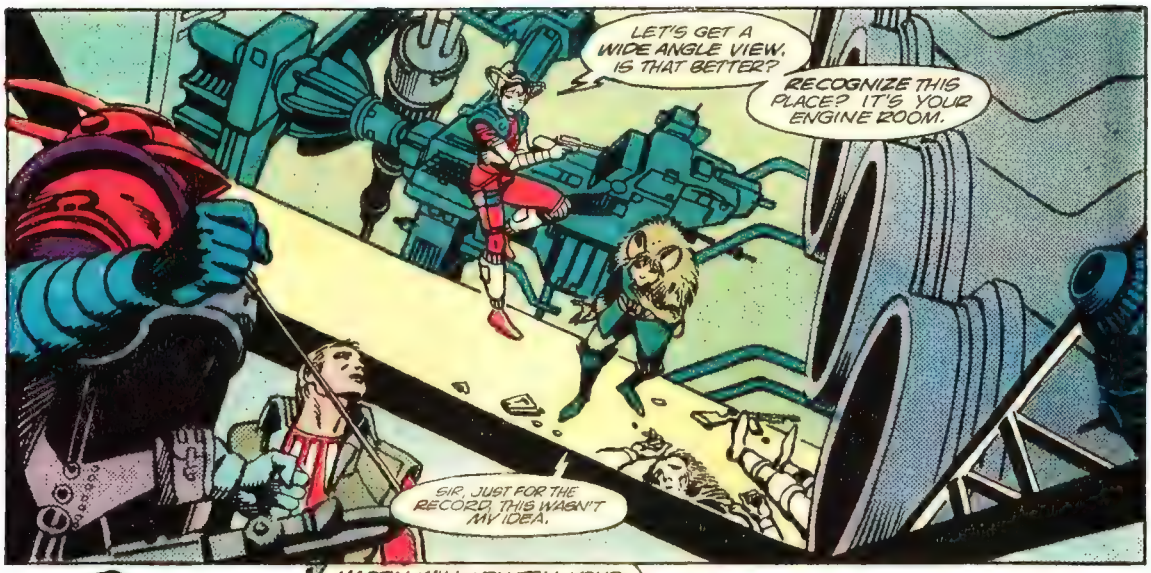

MARTIN CHAMPION.
HOW SHOULD I KILL YOU?
SHOULD I SET WORMS TO CONSUME YOUR FLESH?
SHOULD I LET YOU SHRIEK FOR MERCY AS HOT KNIVES PLUNGE THROUGH YOUR EYES?
SHOULD I KILL YOU AS YOUR SON LOOKS ON OR KILL YOUR SON AS YOU WATCH, HELPLESS?

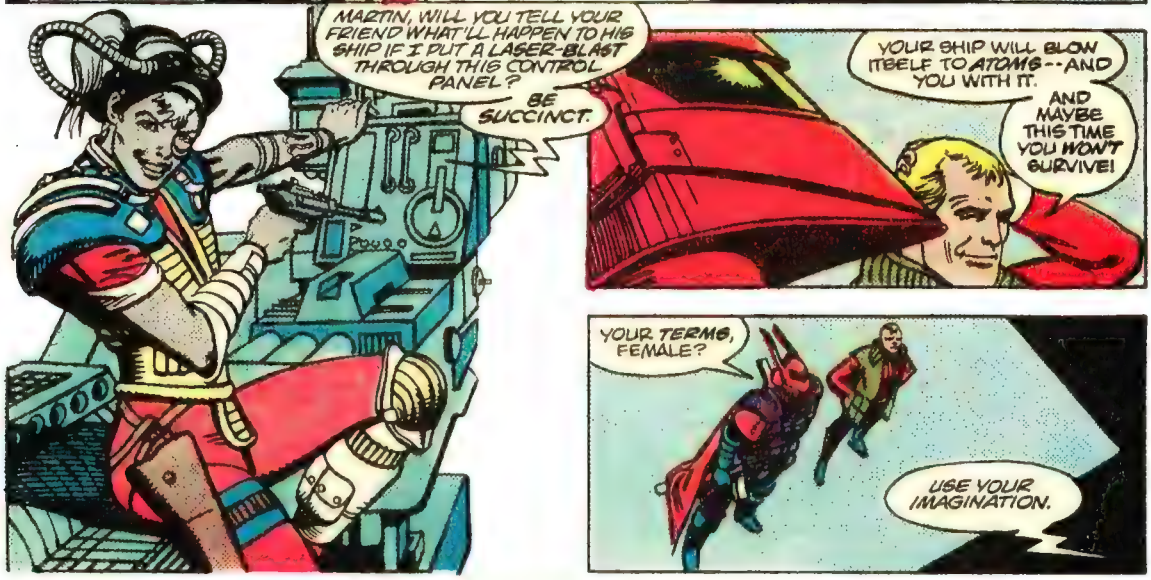

HOW SHOULD I KILL YOU, MARTIN CHAMPION?

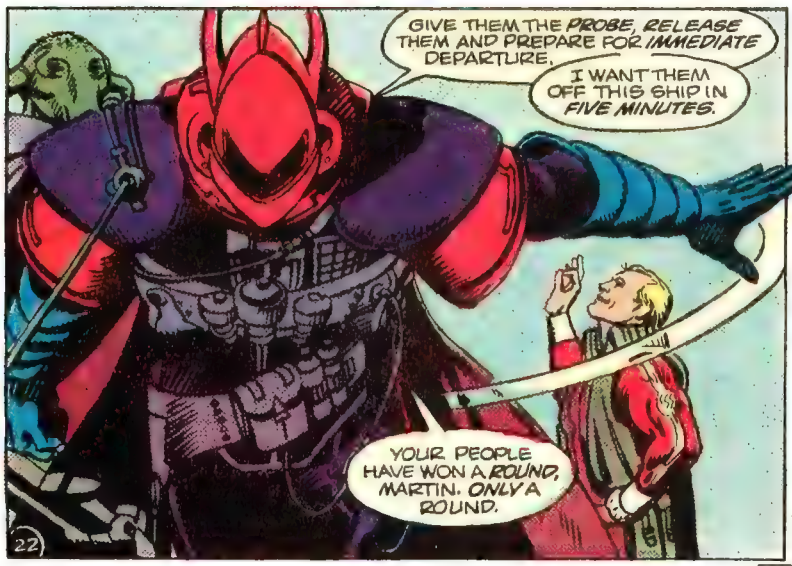

HOW SHOULD YOU LIKE TO DIE?




BUZZ
HI... IS THIS WORKING?
PAKRAT, TURN UP THE VISUAL, I CAN'T QUITE -- OH, THERE YOU ARE. HI. HI, MARTIN.
EH?
UNAUTHORIZED TRANSMISSION ON MAIN MONITOR!
I CAN SEE THAT, FOOL! IT'S THE FEMALE, DART! WHERE IS SHE SPEAKING FROM?







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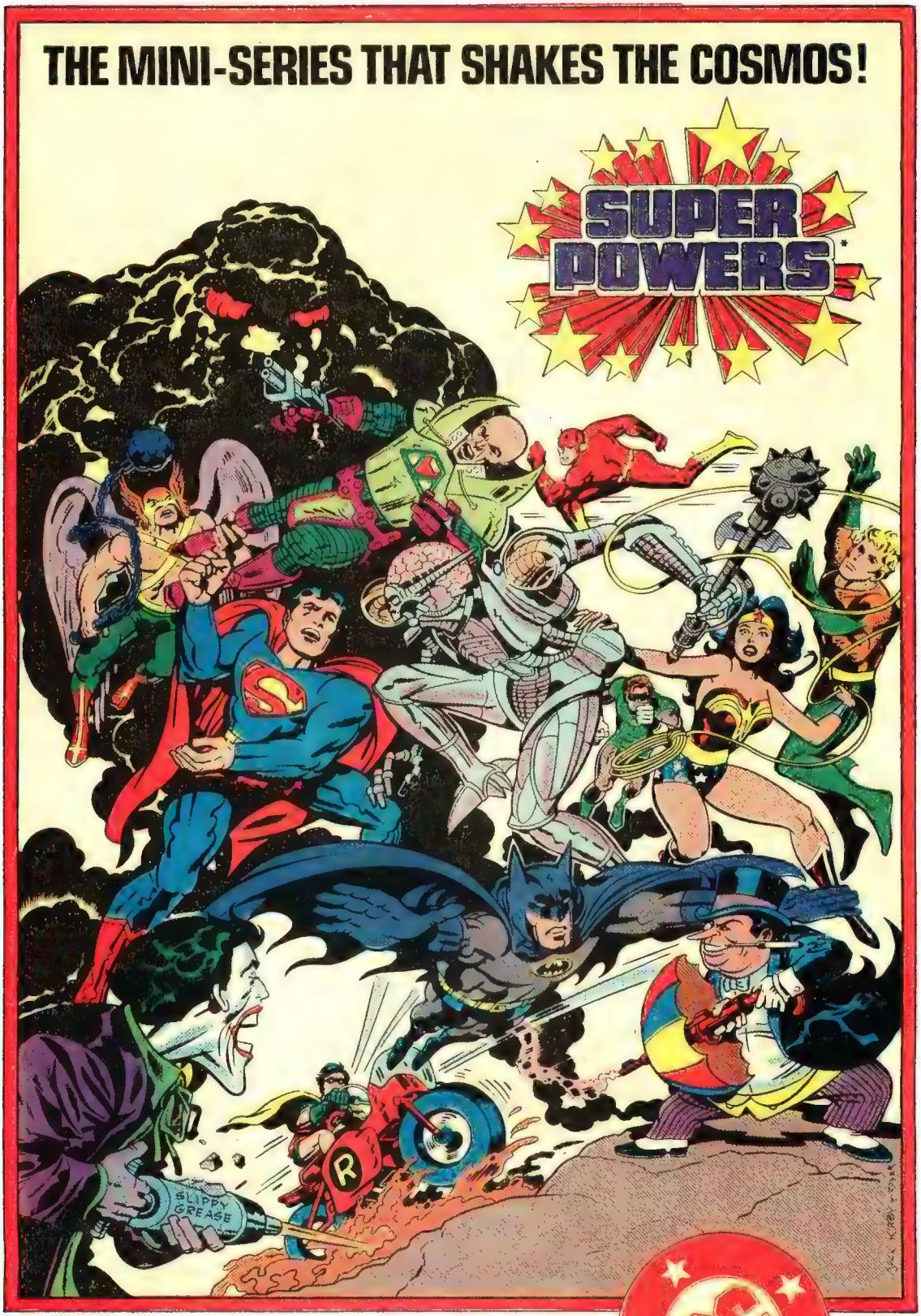

By Jack Kirby, Joey Cavalieri, Adrian Gonzales and Pablo Marcos!

THE NEW DC. THERE'S NO STOPPING US NOW!

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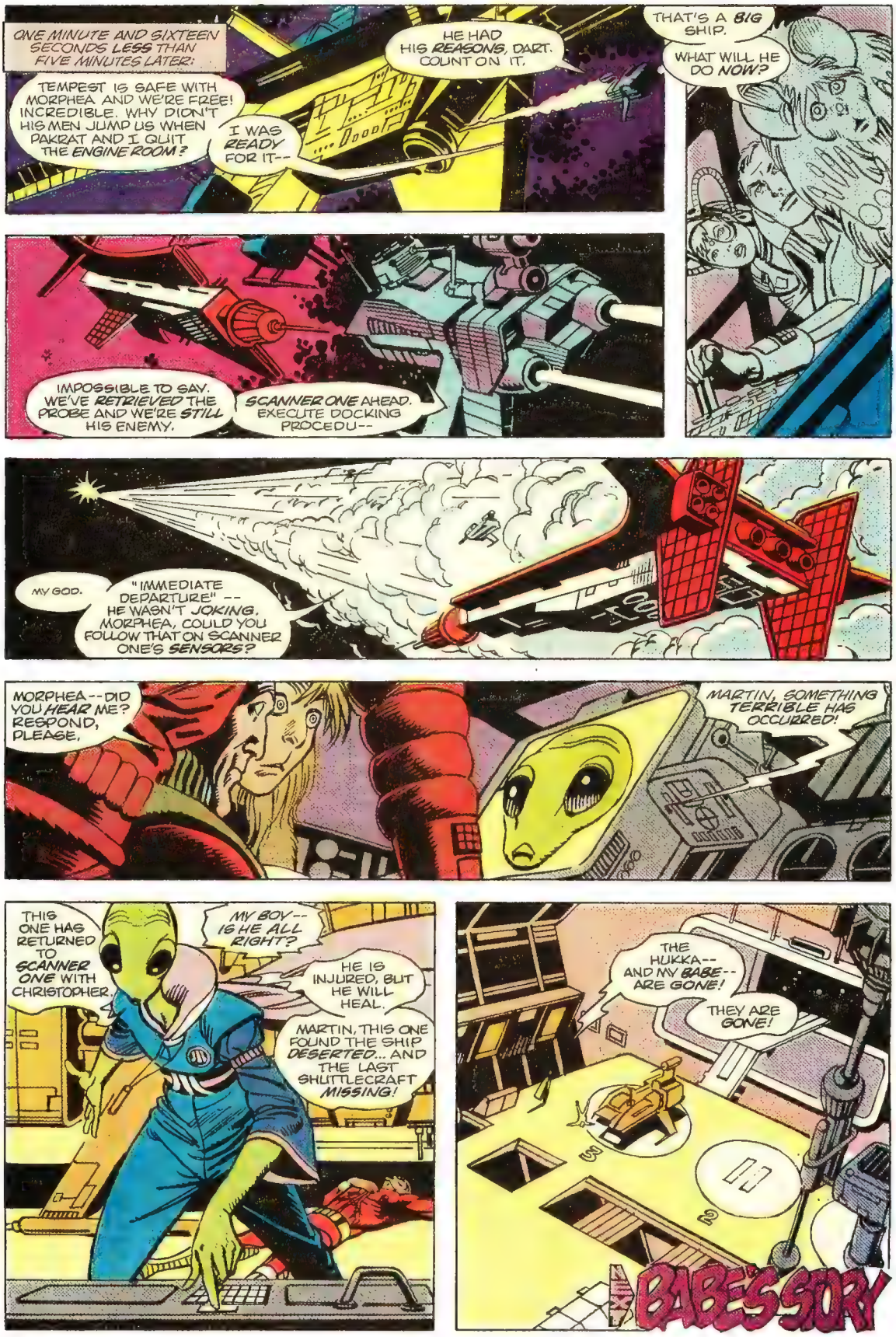
ONE MINUTE AND SIXTEEN SECONDS LESS THAN FIVE MINUTES LATER:
TEMPEST IS SAFE WITH MORPHEA AND WE'RE FREE! INCREDIBLE. WHY DIDN'T HIS MEN JUMP US WHEN PAKRAT AND I QUIT THE ENGINE ROOM?
I WAS READY FOR IT--
HE HAD HIS REASONS, DART. COUNT ON IT.
THAT'S A BIG SHIP.
WHAT WILL HE DO NOW?
IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY. WE'VE RETRIEVED THE PROBE AND WE'RE STILL HIS ENEMY.
SCANNER ONE AHEAD. EXECUTE DOCKING PROCEDU--
MY GOD.
"IMMEDIATE DEPARTURE" -- HE WASN'T JOKING. MORPHEA, COULD YOU FOLLOW THAT ON SCANNER ONE'S SENSORS?
MORPHEA--DID YOU HEAR ME? RESPOND, PLEASE.
MARTIN, SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAS OCCURRED!
THIS ONE HAS RETURNED TO SCANNER ONE WITH CHRISTOPHER.
MY BOY--IS HE ALL RIGHT?
HE IS INJURED, BUT HE WILL HEAL.
MARTIN, THIS ONE FOUND THE SHIP DESERTED... AND THE LAST SHUTTLECRAFT MISSING!
THE HUKKA--AND MY BABE--ARE GONE!
THEY ARE GONE!
BABE'S STORY

FORCE FEEDBACK

L-1648

DC Comics Inc.
666 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10103

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(Instead of the usual pre-letters snappy patter, we're going to dive right into the Feedback mailsacks this month and see what weird and wonderful missives lend themselves to publication here. To wit:)

*****

Dear Atari Gang,

Issue #4 was terrific! Years ago, in the back of LOIS LANE was this little lost gem of a strip I adored. It was *The Rose and The Thorn,* drawn by the master of action art, Ross Andru. I've been a devoted fan ever since. Thus, it was heartwarming to see his beautiful work on this issue.

Storywise, it's nice to see the various plot-paths converging. Seeing the "old" ATARI FORCE makes me add my voice to those other fans requesting that you reprint those earlier game books. Not being blessed with a video-computer yet, I do feel like part of your saga is incomplete. Please try to remedy this.

Again, the adventure is superb.

Your fan,
Ron Fortier
P.O. Box 265
Somerworth, NH 03878

(Ron, your thoughts echo those of many other readers, both in your praise of Ross Andru's distinctively dynamic artwork and in your desire to see the original ATARI FORCE mini-comics reprinted.

As for Ross, he's just taken over penciling THE VIGILANTE, so you can see his latest masterpiece every month there. But regarding the ATARI FORCE mini-comic reprints, we'll just have to wait and see. We're looking at a number of different formats for reprinting them, but ultimately the quantity and intensity of reader response will decide whether or not they ever see (re)print. And higher sales on the ATARI FORCE monthly comic wouldn't hurt either!

In the meantime, however, we're being deluged with requests for the ATARI FORCE mini-comics, as well as for the SWORDQUEST mini-comics. We're afraid that we can't honor these requests—even WE don't have that many to spare. So, as of now, you'll just HAVE to buy the specially marked cartridges to get the comics. Pleeese—no more requests, threats, or offers—we CANNOT be bribed!)

*****

Dear Mr. Helfer,

I loved AF #4, "Families." The art was beautiful; the story was great. Is Hukka a pet or a sentient companion? Li San O'Rourke looks like her Chinese mother and sounds like her Irish father. Both of Dart's parents look so young and handsome; I expected them to have a few more gray hairs.

I especially liked the scenes of Morphea probing Martin's memories and dealing with the captain and Babe. What's all this feldercarp about Morphea not having a family? Just because her créche-parents and créche-siblings weren't blood relatives doesn't mean they're not her family.

Are the immigrants on New Earth and their descendants the only humans in this galaxy of the Multiverse? As I suspected, Martin isn't as crazy as everyone thought. A little paranoid, maybe, but not totally far out. There is...someone out there. Maybe the Dark Destroyer, maybe not. You said DD was tentacled, but Dart's enemy is a biped with only two arms. I wonder how Tukla Oly will fit into the Atari Force.

Sincerely yours,
Susan M. Murrie
3753 Mount Ashmun Place
San Diego, CA 92111

*(While we're sure that some pets ARE sentient creatures, to answer your question, the Hukka is quite intelligent and sensitive. If you're especially curious about the origins of the cute little orange critter, you might try to get a copy of ATARI FORCE mini-comic #3, where the Hukka was first introduced. There, it was explained that the Hukkas were a race of creatures that could perform routine tasks with remarkable ease and conscientiousness, and were lovable companions to their Zylon masters besides. And even though the Zylons were destroyed years ago, there are still zillions of Hukkas on a planet somewhere in the Multiverse. The Hukkas can also be seen popping up in the pages of the STAR*RAIDERS graphic novel—if you can still find it at comic specialty shops.*

As for Morphea, she DOES indeed have a family. But if you've already read this issue, you'll see that it's by no means like a traditional human family.

Although the major concentration of humans are located on New Earth, we'll be meeting humans who've settled on other planets as the series progresses. And as for the Dark Destroyer... well, I'd better clam up, or Gerry will kill me for blowing a major plot twist!—Have I said too much, Gerry?)

*****

Dear Conway, Andru, and Lopez,

ATARI FORCE has come a long way from #1 and it shows. The characters are developing well and the art and dialogue are as good as ever. Now that everyone is on New Earth, I'm wondering why the Dark Destroyer is so bent on killing Dart and her family. I hope these questions are answered soon in upcoming issues.

Paul Bushey
5 Murray Lane
Winslow, ME 04901

(Sorry, Paul, but Gerry won't allow me to answer your very legitimate question. You'll just have to keep reading like the rest of us.)

*****

Dear DC,

I think that a terrible mistake is being made and I hope I can sway your decision before it's too late. I'm talking about ATARI FORCE. The book is a very enjoyable one, with fun characters (I like Dart and Tempest the most, by the way), good writing, and good artwork. The thing I am getting at is the artwork. José Luis Garcia Lopez has long been a favorite artist of mine and I awaited this book eagerly. This was to be his first regular assignment and I was glad. After so many great, great Superman stories and numerous fill-ins, I was ready for a regular Garcia Lopez vehicle. Now, after less than a handful of issues, he is pushed down to inker and shortly, if sources are correct, will be leaving the book entirely.

Now, Ross Andru is a great artist, I like him a lot, but Garcia Lopez is something else entirely. He is one of ATARI FORCE's strong points, a super-dynamic artist. Don't let Garcia Lopez slip away or I fear that ATARI FORCE could be in rough waters. DON'T LET JOSÉ GO!!

Mark Waldman
9639 Amigo Ave.
Northridge, CA 91324

(Whoa, Mark—calm down! José isn't going anywhere! We totally agree that José's presence makes ATARI FORCE a joy to read, and José has no plans to leave. Inking Ross Andru was one of José's professional ambitions, one we were more than overjoyed to help him realize. Now that issues 4 & 5 are finished, José has settled back into his much demanded role of regular penciller. So next time you write, get your sources straight, okay?!)

*****

Dear Mr. Helfer,

In AF #3, "Pakrat goes WILD!" So what else is new? Plenty, among them Rident Oly. Or is it Tukla Rident? I think Tukla Rident has a better ring. The point may be moot, since Rident called his brother "Tukla" at least three times. Perhaps Rident was using the surname contemptuously, to underline the family's shame. (By the way, is it "Tuck-la," or "Took-la"? I like "Took-la.") Pakrat mentioned brothers. No sisters? Well, it's possible. And I hope those things he trashed were androids.

Dr. Morphea is becoming more interesting also. How nice that she came to New Earth on my 69th birthday. Something to look forward to. I think she's being too hard on herself, though. I don't think she really understands emotions. Emotions can create and strengthen identity. On the other hand, who am I to judge another entire culture?

I'm curious about the meaning, purpose, and origin of the elaborate tattoos on the left side of Dart's body. ("Elaborate"! Gad! You could use full frontal nudity and no one would even notice.) I suppose you'll let us all know in time.

As for reprinting the original AF books, go for it! Not caring for video games, I got the first three issues by hook or crook (two from Atari, one from a store with a faulty game cartridge), and I have the feeling, since AF is a hot title, that the whole bunch of them are going to be harder to get than DC COMICS PRESENTS #26. $!

Signed,
John Henry Sain
2251 Kings Highway
Medford, OR 97501

(Y'know, John, we were going to answer some of your questions, but it looks like you answered them all for us! As for the value of ATARI FORCE back issues, all we can say is that we've got a couple hundred locked away in our safe deposit boxes—hopefully, one day they'll pay for the kid's college education!)

*****

Dear Gerry, Ross, and José,

Congratulations on an awesome comic. Yes, I'm talking about AF #4.

The story was great, albeit a little lacking in action. It was terrific to see Dart and Chris together. The scene they were in was good, too. I've only read the first issue of the mini-comic, so I've never seen Mohandas, Li San, or Hukka before, but I think they're great characters and should be given bigger parts.

Question time: How come, on page 7, you show the "Kylos" taking off, but on page 12, panel 4, it's still connected to the gantry? Other than that, though, the Martin/Morphea scene was great. The flashback to Martin and Lydia's conversation with Lucas brings up another, simpler question. Where is Lucas nowadays? Is he still with ATARI, or what? Please explain this soon.

Now for the art. I have a little less to say about this, and here it is: STUNNING! BEAUTIFUL! AWESOME! How's that? Ross' pencils were great, as were Jose's inks. Puh-leeeese get these two to do a few more issues.

Old business: Is Prof. Venture's first name Caitlin (Chris' fact file, ish #2) or Lucia (pg. 7, ish #3)? Please clear this up.

D.C. forever,
Rich Bowen
11612 So. Sheridan
Tacoma, WA 98444

(The "Kylos" took off for a couple of panels to restock their Kug supply at the local "Kug shop"—there are hundreds of them all over the galaxy—and returned so the captain could "kug-a-lug" before meeting up with Morphea again. For more information on Kug—the national drink of New Earth—see Andrew Logan's letter below.

You've already seen a bit more of Lucas Orion, and he'll be popping up now and then as the series continues. And the Caitlin/Lucia Venture controversy has reached its conclusion: As of issue #5—page 2, to be precise—the name of Chris Champion's sometime mentor is Lucia Caitlin Venture. Got that, Morphea?

Well, the clock on the wall says it's time to check out a few missives from our younger readers, so here goes:)

*****

Dear "Advanced Technology and Research Institute":

I love your comic. I was looking through comic racks and ATARI FORCE caught my eye. I thought—Hey! Maybe this is the same as the ATARI FORCE I got with my Defender cartridge! I bought it, read it, and found I was wrong. But I loved it! I showed my friend (Joe Eudy) and got him hooked. He got his friend (Aaron Black) hooked, and we all love it! I even got my sister liking it. She says it's "sharp."

In issue #3 I was sorry to see what happened to Blackjak. He and Dart are my favorite characters. My compliments to Garcia Lopez and his art.

I just started collecting comic books and I'm glad I did in time for ATARI FORCE. It is my favorite comic. Thanks for a great comic crew.

Rick Edwards
1206 Roberta Ann
Sherwood, AR 72116

(Glad to have you and your buddies aboard, Rick. Keep on showing ATARI FORCE to your other friends—the more the merrier! We're sorry that you were sorry to see Blackjak's untimely death, but this next letter makes US wonder if we did the right thing!)

*****

Dear ATARI FORCE Creators:

Aha, you fools fell into my trap, this letter will eat you up! After reading ATARI FORCE #3 I got so mad my Mood Ring exploded! You had to kill off the best character, didn't you? Yes, I mean Blackjak, who did you think I meant, that idiot the captain? In ATARI FORCE #1 the captain said, "We're running out of Kug," but in issue #2 he got drunk on Kug. Where did he get more Kug? The local Kug shop? Now listen here. You put Blackjak back or I'll get angry. I have written many letters to comic book editors, but this is the first time I had to get angry!

Sincerely,
Andrew Logan

(Take it easy, Andrew! It's only a comic book! In answer to your question about the captain, it's really quite simple—you're right!)

*****

Dear José Luis Garcia Lopez,

I just started reading ATARI FORCE. It's great, you do a great job at drawing! I like drawing, it's like a hobby. By the way, my name is James Patrick McKane IV. My hobbies are Dungeons and Dragons, and drawing space guns and ships. But when I draw ships I can't get the details right. I'm also into videogames and computers. I've got the last two issues (2 & 3). I'd like to ask if you could send me some sketches or drawings or steps to drawing ships and guns and drawings for Blackjak and Dart. You don't have to send them. You might have work to do. Bye.

Sincerely,
James

P.S.: If you do send the drawings, could you start sending them monthly, of new guns and ships and Christopher Champion and Pakrat? That's all. Bye.

(Sorry, James—and all the other readers who wrote asking for original sketches—but José is much too busy drawing each monthly issue of ATARI FORCE to send personal sketches. Much as he'd love to be able to, José's drawing hand is all tied up at the moment, and from the look of reader response to his dazzling artwork, it will be for a long time to come.)

*****

(That's all the room we have this issue. Before we go, however, we'd like to remind you of a couple of things: First, please sign your name and address to your letter, not just the envelope. Second, if you're under 12 years of age, include your age in your letter. Third, don't send us any money, either for back issues or subscriptions. Fourth, be nice to old people, and fifth, don't play in traffic.

—Andy Helfer

Next issue: Boy o boy o boy! Have we got an issue for you! Babe is lost in space, and when he finally reaches terra firma, he lands right in the middle of—what? Meanwhile, aboard Scanner One, the ATARI FORCE try to figure out what happened to Babe as Dart has some more rather disturbing visions. All this and the introduction of what might be the weirdest new character yet! What else can we say but—be there, or don't!

MEANWHILE...

HELP!

I'm writing a *Meanwhile...* column that will attempt to introduce all you new kids on the block to our readers and give them some idea of who you are, where you come from, and what you do. To do this the info must come from you. So...

1-Who are you? (A soviet spy; a zucchini lover; a box-seat holder at the Met, etc.)

2-What do you do? (Your job; your un-job)

3-Where do you come from? (Professional experience; hometown; relative education)

4-Comments: (I wish I were a bricklayer... etc.)

Give me the facts... and a touch of humor. Our readers relate badly to stuffed shirts.

From the Desk of Janice Race, Associate Editor/Editor

I could lie and say I'm a Russian princess, but I promised to give you the facts, so here goes.

I grew up in the Bronx, in the shadow of Yankee Stadium, which probably accounts for my being an avid fan of the Bronx Bombers. My favorite cookies are Fig Newtons, and I love my looney bird, Lester. (Hey, nobody's perfect!)

Before coming to DC, I earned my keep as a textbook editor for a publishing company that has since headed for the Sunshine State. Prior to that, I was a copy editor on medical and legal books.

Here, at DC, I am the New York contact for most of the books written and edited by Roy Thomas and Gerry Conway. I also lend a helping hand on **TALES OF THE NEW TEEN TITANS.** In addition to those tasks, I edit **BLACKHAWK, WORLD'S FINEST,** and an upcoming maxi-series that is as yet untitled. (Phew, for a person who never read a super-hero comic book in her life before coming to DC, I sure am busy!)

I will admit that I've considered wallpaper hanging as a life's work, and it is still in the back of my mind. In the meantime, the people at DC are so terrific, I think I'll stick around for a while.

Glad to hear that, Janice. Now I can stop shackling you to your desk. Besides, I like people who can get the job done without raising the dust and who smile a lot.

Janice forgot to mention that she gets some off-premises training from her husband, Gary, who knows a bit about comics and who remarked to me at **DC**'s smashing Christmas party, "This is the best job *we* ever had!"

DG

Nicola Cuti's Biography (Sung to the tune of "Climb Every Mountain")

When people ask me: "Nick, what do you do for a living?" I tell them I am an artist/writer, because if I tell them I am an associate editor, then I have to explain what an associate editor does and I hate to explain things. Of course, there are drawbacks to admitting one is an artist—people immediately ask you to draw something. I am not a sketcher. I admit, freely, that I work exclusively from photographs, which is why I am a magazine illustrator and not a comic book illustrator. If I were a proctologist, I'm certain no one would ask me to demonstrate my craft in the middle of a cocktail party, but it was my brother who went into the medical profession, not me.

My experience in the field comes from various editorial positions at Charlton Comics and Warren Publications and I have been writing stories for comics since 1969—everything from POPEYE to E-MAN, including war, romance, horror, and science fiction. As a writer I guess I'm a jack-of-all-trades, master of none.

For those of you who have wondered about my name—it is masculine, as am I, and my ethnic background is Brooklynese. I was born in Gravesend.

My fondest wish is to continue to work in comics and free-lance as a writer/artist. If I had to choose a second profession it would be to work for the Mystic Seaport Aquarium as a feeder in their shark tank.

Somehow I get the feeling that you may have gotten some training at **DC** that prepares you for your chosen "second *profession.*" Some of the duties of an associate editor bear a striking resemblance to feeding sharks.

A few years back, I convinced Joe Orlando to hire Nick, who was, and is, an old friend. When an opening came in my department, I managed to steal Nick back and gave him semi-honest work. Right, Nick?

DG

Brenda Pope, Good Person

My name is Brenda Pope (no relation). I'm one of the new additions to the DC editorial crew. I'm the proofreader. I make sure all the words are spelled right. I check the back of Superman's cape for the "S" symbol. I make sure the women are well-clothed, the men don't fight too much, and the kids don't use foul language. It's a dirty job, but somebody's gotta do it.

Once, I was a free-lance copy editor. I worked for Harlequin Romance, Warner Books, and Dell Publishing. I had it all. But I left it behind for DC. What a place. At first, I wasn't quite sure about it. I mean, comic books? Is that any way to earn a living? Back home in England, we NEVER read comics. Later, when my family moved to South Africa, the only comics I ever managed to sneak a peek at were rumpled old copies of RICHIE RICH. I wasn't prepared for this. But I learned. Quickly.

I have E. Nelson Bridwell to thank for teaching me the proofreading ropes. And now, six months later, I'm into it. Or, judging from the pile of unproofread original art stacked on top of my "IN" box, make that *under* it.

Brenda proofreads all our comics (average: around forty a month) all the covers, all the letter pages, and this column. As a matter of fact, if she's on the job, she just corrected "proofreads" above to one word. My original copy had it as two words.

DG

The rest of the folk to whom my memo was addressed will get their moment in the spotlight in the *Meanwhile* Column. Look for it in the next few weeks... *no, no,* Brenda, don't change that! I meant *week* not *month.* That's right... from now on, I plan to do four (count 'em, four) *Meanwhile*'s a month with the help of others on occasion and often including a new "spotlight on..." feature.

(Why do I do these things? I have trouble writing one of these a month! Now four? It's not as though I get paid extra or anything... either I'm a glutton for punishment or I really like writing.) Anyway, I'll try... God knows, I'll try.

Thank you and Good Afternoon.

Dick

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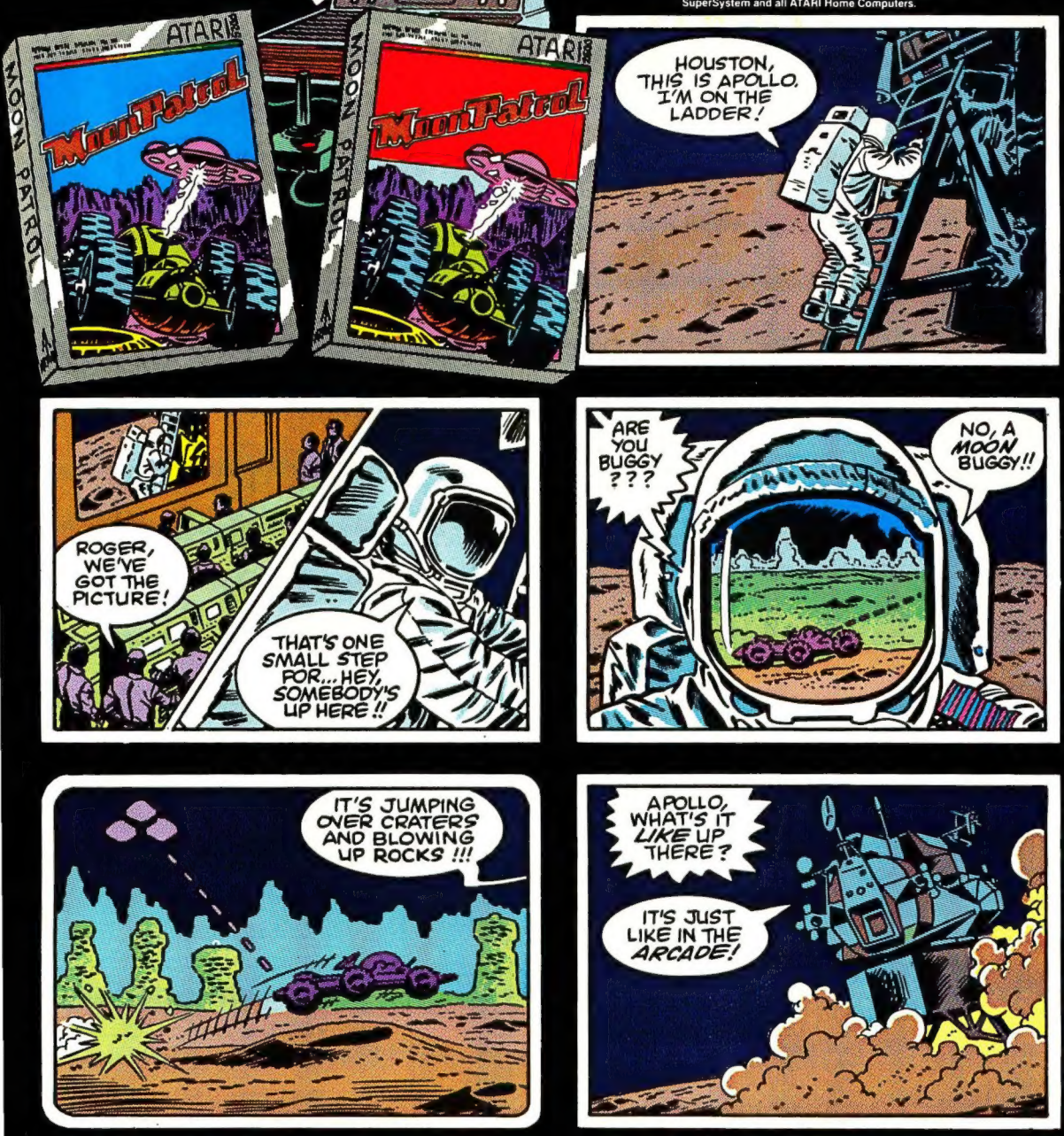

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